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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

these rapt enthusiasts, is the miracle; beyond the fact is the mystery; beyond the mere daily labor which digs the ditch and rears lock-chambers, is the prophetic enthusiasm which foresees something vaguely grand in this new world-venture, which beholds destiny beckoning from the lofty tip of every steam-shovel, and a new era opening with the swing and surge of those mighty gates.

These men on the Isthmus, performing seven thousand labors of Hercules with their giant tools, removing mountains and uniting oceans in a mood of lyric rapture—these men, our strong compatriots, are poets, in imagination and idealistic motive if not in words.

Will the articulate poets prove worthy of them?

H. M.

PARIS

The limitations of space forbid our giving anything like a complete or adequate chronicle of contemporary French publications. Those who desire such a chronicle should follow M. Duhamel's fortnightly rubric in the *Mercure de France*, and they should subscribe to *L'Effort Libre*, *Les Bandeaux d'Or*, *La Nouvelle Revue Francaise*, or some other French magazine.

I have just finished a series of critical articles on French verse (*The New Age*, Sept. 4 and following). I propose to give here merely a summary of my conclusions.

I think if our American bards would study Remy de Gourmont for rhythm, Laurent Tailhade for delineation,

Henri de Régnier for simplicity of syntactical construction, Francis Jammes for humanity, and the faculty of rendering one's own time; and if they would get some idea of intensity from Tristan Corbière (since they will not take their Villon in the original), there might be some hope for American poetry.

If our writers would keep their eye on Paris instead of on London—the London of today or of yesterday—there might be some chance of their doing work that would not be *démodé* before it gets to the press. Practically the whole development of the English verse-art has been achieved by steals from the French, from Chaucer's time to our own, and the French are always twenty to sixty years in advance. As the French content and message are so different from the American content and message, I think the Americans would be less likely to fall into slavish imitation and would learn hardly more than the virtues of method.

Tristan Corbière is dead. His work was known to Verlaine and to Richopin, yet he can scarcely be said to have been published until the nineties. He is gaunt as the Breton coast, where his personal appearance had earned him the nickname of an *ankou* (a corpse). Verlaine compared him to François Villon, not without reason. He is not Villon, but he is poignant and very much himself.

The work of M. Henri de Régnier has the fineness and the limitations of Greek vase-painting.

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M. Remy de Gourmont has made a most valuable contribution to our knowledge of rhythm-structure in his very beautiful *Livre de Litanies*, now contained in *Le Pèlerin du Silence*.

The satires of M. Laurent Tailhade are altogether uproarious and delectable.

The work of M. Francis Jammes is perhaps the most varied and the most human. Its qualities are such that the two papers by Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer, recently printed in this magazine, might have been written for the express purpose of praising it. I am inclined to think that he is the most important poet in France, but my reading is not exhaustive and this must be taken as a temporary estimate.

M. Verhaeren is held by some to be the greater poet. M. Paul Fort has been elected *Prince des Poètes*. I do not wish to speak of M. Paul Claudel until I have had time to study him entire both in his prose and in his verse.

Most of the younger men would seem to be descended from these authors.

M. Jules Romains is perhaps the most commanding figure among *les jeunes*. He has, as they say, "*changé la pathétique*." There is a very clear exposition of the Unanimist doctrines at the end of *Les Puissances de Paris*. I recommend the *Poème Epique* in *Un Etre en Marche* and the *Prières* in *Odes et Prières*.

M. Charles Vildrac has a charming narrative gift, and M. André Spire is something very like an Imagiste.

M. Henri-Martin Barzun stands apart from the rest and preaches "Simultaneity," which is to say, he wishes us to write our poems for a dozen voices at once as they write an orchestral score. M. Jammes has done something like this in *Le Triomphe de la Vie*. M. Barzun's ideas, as expressed in *L'Ere du Drame*, are interesting, and *L'Hymne des Forces* moved me by its content and underlying force rather than by its execution. The proletariat would seem to be getting something like a coherent speech. This seems to me significant. Though M. Barzun's propositions may seem, at first, fitted for comic rather than for serious expression, I am not sure that he has not hit upon the true medium for democratic expression, the fitting method of synthesis.

Those desiring an introduction to a greater number of French poets are referred to: *Poètes d'Aujourd'hui*, by A. Van Bever and Paul Leautaud, pub. *Mercur de France*, 26 rue de Conde, Paris; *Une Anthologie*, pub. *L'Effort Libre*, Galerie Vildrac, 11 rue de Seine; and to F. S. Flint's notes in *Poetry and Drama*, especially the number for August, 1912.

I know that the most difficult part of approaching a foreign literature, especially the contemporary foreign literature, consists in finding what books to begin on. I know that I spent about four years puddling about on the edges of modern French poetry without getting

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anywhere near it. I therefore give the following list of books for the convenience of those who want to read books worth while, and who want to form some general and not inaccurate idea of what the term "Modern French Poetry" means: Tristan Corbière: *Les Amours Jaunes*; pub. A. Messein, 19 Quai Saint-Michel. Henri de Régnier: *Oeuvres*, or *Les Jeux Rustiques et Divins*, and *Les Médailles d'Argile*; Mercure de France. Laurent Tailhade: *Poèmes Aristophanesques*; Mercure. Remy de Gourmont: *Le Pèlerin de Silence*: Prose works: *Le Latin Mystique*, *Les Chevaux de Diomède*, etc.; Mercure. Francis Jammes: *De l'Angélus de l'Aube à l'Angélus du Soir*, *Le Deuil des Primevères*, *Le Triomphe de la Vie*, *Clairières dans le Ciel*, and prose works; Mercure.

This list is not intended to be complete. I simply refer you to those books which are, among those I have had time to go over, the most worth reading. I have mentioned none that is not very much worth reading. M. Rimbaud is also very important, if you do not know him already. Among the younger men I should note Jules Romains: *Un Être en Marche* (to be read before *Odes et Prières*; also prose works; Mercure. Charles Vildrac: *Livre d'Amour*; pub. Eugène Figuière, 7 rue Corneille. Henri-Martin Barzun: *Hymne des Forces*; prose, *L'Ere du Drame*; Figuière. André Spire: *Versets*; Mercure. Also *Alcools*, by Guillaume Apollinaire (Mercure), is clever.

Ezra Pound